

STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
WILLIAM TONG

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# Why I voted against raising income taxes.

In the past legislative session, both the Governor and certain legislative committees proposed to increase income taxes. I strongly opposed these proposed tax increases, and I want you to know why.

In Hartford, there is broad agreement that our education funding system—based on the Education Cost Sharing Formula (ECS) and other statutory grants—needs to be overhauled and reformed. Many recognize that Stamford and New Canaan do not get the help we need for our schools, for important and necessary municipal services, and for much needed property tax relief. The proposed tax increases, however, called for us to do too much, without giving us the help we need. With the state expecting nearly \$1 billion in surplus revenue, I did not see the need to raise income taxes.

So when it came time to vote, I explained that I could not let Stamford and New Canaan pay more to get shortchanged again. I did what I had to do. I said no.

In the end, we were able to increase Stamford's Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant by more than 30% over the next two years; New Canaan's by more than 50%. And we were able to do it without raising income taxes.



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# STANDING OUR GROUND

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2007 SESSION



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# STATE REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM TONG



## Keep Them Safe: Strong Laws to Protect Our Kids

CONNECTICUT PASSES JESSICA'S LAW (PA 07-143)  
As a leader on the Judiciary Committee, I helped to pass “Jessica’s Law,” which toughens the penalties for sex offenders by requiring mandatory minimum sentences for certain offenses, and making it easier for a child to submit testimony against an accused sex offender. The law establishes a new crime of aggravated sexual assault of a child under age 13 that carries a mandatory minimum prison term of 25 years for a first offense and 50 years for a second offense.

REINFORCING SCHOOL SECURITY (PA 07-208)  
To ensure safety and security in Connecticut’s public schools, the legislature created the Security Assistance For Education (S.A.F.E.) Program to help schools assess their security, provide security infrastructure improvements, and ensure that school personnel receive appropriate training.

MANDATORY SCREENING FOR LEAD POISONING (PA 07-2)  
Lead screening is now mandatory for all Connecticut children up to age 3. Lead exposure is considered the most common environmental hazard for children, and less than half of Connecticut children under age 2 are currently screened for traces of lead. Beginning January 1, 2009, all primary care physicians will be required to test 1- and 2-year-old children for lead poisoning.

BANNING SCHOOL PESTICIDES (PA 07-168)  
A ban on the application of lawn care pesticides on school playing fields and playgrounds will now include middle schools. The ban had previously only protected elementary schools.

## Major Increases in Education Cost Sharing Dollars (ECS): Great News for Students, Families, and Taxpayers

We fought hard to substantially increase Stamford’s and New Canaan’s share of state education funding *without an income tax increase*. There’s still a great deal of work to be done, but this new money provides real help to students, families and property taxpayers.

Increases in ECS funding for 2008-2009 (total increase over 2 years):

**STAMFORD + 31%**  
**NEW CANAAN + 54%**

## Taking Care Of Our Teachers: Teachers Retirement Fund Now Fully Funded (PA 07-186)

I was proud to stand with our teachers and co-sponsor the bill to fully fund the Teachers’ Retirement Fund, which faces a total liability of more than \$6.9 billion. First, we made an immediate \$300 million infusion from the state surplus over the next two years. Second, we approved the sale of \$2 billion in pension obligation bonds to cover our obligations in the long run.

## Tong Passes Major Anti-Crime Bill

As a freshman, Representative Tong passed an Act Concerning the Reporting of Lost & Stolen Firearms and Illegal Firearms Trafficking (PA 07-163), which the Governor signed into law on June 19, 2007. Police and prosecutors now have the tools they need to get illegal guns off our streets before they are used in violent crime. It has been hailed as one of the most important crime prevention laws passed in recent years.



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## Honoring Our Seniors: Making Retirement More Affordable

SENIOR HOMECARE OPTIONS PROGRAM (PA 07-130)  
Connecticut’s HomeCare Options Program will enable more seniors to live at home instead of costly nursing home care. Participants can make deposits into a HomeCare Trust Fund account to be used at a later date to pay for such things as companion or homemaker services, adult day care, and preparation of meals or transportation. Interest earned on fund accounts is exempt from the state income tax, and any unspent account funds will become part of the beneficiary’s estate.

SENIOR DRIVING INSURANCE DISCOUNT (PA 07-05)  
Drivers age 60 and up are now eligible for an automobile insurance policy premium discount after successfully completing a Department of Motor Vehicles approved accident prevention course. For more information, contact AAA at (800) 842-4320 or AARP at 1-888-227-7669.

## Train & Transportation Update

As a former commuter, I know the new trains can’t get here soon enough. The 342 new trains we bought for Metro-North are being manufactured now – we’ll see the first car in late 2008, with the remainder delivered in 2009-2010. We’re pushing immediate legislation for 38 more cars and to direct the Governor and the DOT to seek out manufacturers that can deliver cars sooner. Also, Metro-North will start its Penn Station pilot program in fall 2009, providing Sunday service through Penn Station to the Meadowlands (toward the goal of off-peak service in 2010). Metro-North’s pilot service to Yankee Stadium will also begin in 2009.

## Summer Saver Rewards Program: Save Real Money on Your Electricity Bill

In the Energy Bill, we created the Summer Saver Rewards program so you can conserve and save more money on your electricity bill. The legislature directed the electricity companies to offer “a new summer energy conservation reward program in which you, as a CL&P residential or commercial customer, can enroll. The program asks Connecticut residents to reduce their energy consumption at least 10% this summer compared to last summer. If you do reduce your energy consumption by 10, 15 or 20 percent compared to the same period in 2006, you’ll earn a credit on your electric bill equal to that percentage. (This credit will be only applied to the Billed Generation Charge on your electric bill).”

<http://www.clp.com/clmres/energy/SummerSaverRewards.asp>.

## Driving Energy Costs Down: Comprehensive Energy Reform Bill Passed (PA 07-242)

As a member of the Energy & Technology Committee, I helped structure the state’s first comprehensive energy reform law in nearly a decade so that we can begin to stabilize and drive down electricity and energy costs in the long term. The new law:

- Increases power generation and supply by permitting electric companies to generate power again (there were disincentives to doing so under deregulation)
- Expands funding for distributed generation (technologies such as micro-turbines and fuel cells)
- Requires electric companies to develop plans to deploy “smart meters” so consumers can choose to use power at different times of the day, and pay lower prices for off-peak use
- Exempts solar, geothermal and ice storage systems and installation from sales tax
- Requires cities and towns to exempt residential solar heating/cooling and geothermal systems from local property tax
- Exempts hybrid cars that get 40 mpg or more from sales tax until July 1, 2010
- Empowers towns and cities to exempt hybrids that get 40 mpg or more from local property tax
- Expands green building standards for state buildings and construction
- Restores \$85 million to the Clean Energy Fund (for research and investments in renewable energy)
- Increases the amount of renewable energy electricity companies must use in providing service